

STARGAZERS

A ten minute play

By Greg Gould

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CAST

DANNY a weird teenager

BECKY a bored teenager

DR LUDWIG a nutty professor

SETTING

An isolated field

TIME

Night

[DANNY and BECKY enter. Danny is leading Becky. Becky is wearing a blindfold.]

BECKY: We there yet?

DANNY: Almost.

BECKY: We've been walking for like twenty minutes.

DANNY: Not far.

BECKY: Can I at least see where we're going?

DANNY: That would ruin the surprise.

BECKY: This is so stupid. If I fall and ruin these jeans, I'll be pissed.

DANNY: You're fine. In fact, here we are.

[Becky takes the blindfold off, looks around.]

BECKY: We're in a field.

DANNY: Surprise.

BECKY: Why are we in a field? You're not gonna make me tip a cow or something?

DANNY: Look up.

BECKY: This is kinda weird.

DANNY: Just look.

[Becky looks up.]

[LFX: an enchanting, glittering star-filled sky]

BECKY: Holy shit.

DANNY: Cool huh?

BECKY: It's ... it's ...

DANNY: Beautiful?

BECKY: Big. I was gonna say big.

DANNY: New moon tonight.

BECKY: What happened to the old one?

DANNY: It's rising and setting with the sun. That's why the sky's so bright. Look. You can see the Double Cluster. And the Lagoon Nebula.

BECKY: How do you know this stuff?

DANNY: My dad.

BECKY: Of course. The nutty professor.

DANNY: Black holes. Planets. Nebulae. He lives for this stuff.

BECKY: Is that why he's so ... kooky?

DANNY: You think he's kooky?

BECKY: Strangest damn science teacher I've ever had.

DANNY: He just wants to understand. What's out there. How it works.

BECKY: Oh god. You didn't bring me here for that?

DANNY: For what?

BECKY: The space talk. Why are we here? Are we alone? Will I be abducted by aliens and probed in the you-know-what?

DANNY: You're not curious?

BECKY: About probing?

DANNY: About the stars.

BECKY: Not really. I mean, I look up and it's amazing. But it's big. And far away. So far it doesn't matter.

DANNY: Doesn't matter? It's everything.

BECKY: Not everything.

DANNY: Everything that's not here.

BECKY: Which could be a whole lot of nothing.

DANNY: It's not nothing.

BECKY: How do you know?

DANNY: Statistics and probability.

BECKY: Statistics?

DANNY: And probability. Space is infinite. No start. No end. The size of it is incomprehensible. Yet if even the smallest fraction of it contains "something", that's a hell of a lot of "not nothing".

BECKY: So you believe in little green men?

DANNY: Not green men. But something.

BECKY: So why haven't we seen this "something"?

DANNY: Statistics and probability. Think about it. Throughout history here on earth, civilisations here have risen, flourished, and died. Most without any contact. It's the same out there. Just bigger. The chances of two sentient organisms existing at the same time, within reasonable proximity ... the odds are astronomical. Literally.

BECKY: You sound like him.

DANNY: Who?

BECKY: The nutty professor.

DANNY: We are related.

BECKY: Is this really why you brought me here? To gaze at stars?

DANNY: You don't like them?

BECKY: Honestly, I'm much more interested with what's happening down here.

DANNY: And what's that?

BECKY: You tell me. I've seen you. Looking at me. In class. On the bus.

DANNY: You have?

BECKY: I don't know about black holes or nebulae. But I know when a boy likes me.

DANNY: Fascinating.

BECKY: "Fascinating"? Really? You're so weird.

DANNY: I'm not that weird.

BECKY: You're super weird. First day of school. You shook hands with every person you met. That was weird. Mrs Pattinson. You asked her if she and her guide dog had a "symbiotic relationship". That was weird. Charlotte. You gave her a live goat for her birthday. That was weird. And don't get me started on the Roman sandals.

DANNY: You don't like my sandals?

BECKY: You're lucky. I like weird. Makes you not boring. Though it doesn't explain why you brought out me here. Tonight.

DANNY: I needed to know.

BECKY: Know what?

DANNY: If I found what I was looking for.

BECKY: And what's that?

DANNY: A connection. To see if we're compatible.

BECKY: Compatible? You mean ... *[She kisses him]* ... compatible? *[Beat]* Seem pretty compatible to me.

DANNY: I agree.

[LFX: headlights fall across them.]

BECKY: What the hell?

DANNY: Oh god.

BECKY: Is that ...?

DANNY: Yep.

BECKY: What's he doing here?

[Enter DR LUDWIG, exuberant.]

LUDWIG: Danny! Thank Jupiter. You weren't at the house.

DANNY: Yeah, we were just -

LUDWIG: Did you receive the communication?

DANNY: What communication?

LUDWIG: Just came in. We've got significant solar interference. The window has narrowed. Our timetable has been advanced.

DANNY: Advanced? To when?

LUDWIG: Now, boy. Now! Have you got your locator?

DANNY: Yeah, but -

LUDWIG: Excellent. Initiate power. Signals at full strength.

BECKY: Signals at what ... ?

LUDWIG: Who's the girl?

DANNY: This is Becky.

LUDWIG: Who?

BECKY: Becky, Dr Ludwig. I have you for physics ...

LUDWIG: She can't be here.

DANNY: We were just talking.

LUDWIG: No time for talk! Sorry dear. I'm sure your parents want you home

BECKY: Actually, Mum said I could stay out till eleven ... [*DR LUDWIG starts pacing the stage with his locator device.*] What is he doing?

DANNY: Calibrating.

BECKY: For what?

DANNY: To leave.

BECKY: Wait. You're moving? When?

DANNY: Now. Apparently.

BECKY: You can't leave! I just ... We just... You're the only interesting thing in this town!

DANNY: Sorry. I thought I had more time.

BECKY: But why? Did your dad get a job somewhere else?

DANNY: Something like that.

LUDWIG: We've got a lock! Suit up, boy. Don't want to be mistaken for the local wild life. [*Beat.*] She's still here.

DANNY: She was just leaving.

BECKY: No I wasn't. I don't care how weird you are. You can't kiss me then just take off.

LUDWIG: You kissed her? Where?

DANNY: On the mouth.

LUDWIG: Fascinating! What was it like?

BECKY: Excuse me?

DANNY: It was nice.

BECKY: (smiling) Nice? Really?

LUDWIG: Hardly a scientific analysis. Any physiological changes?

DANNY: Increased heart rate. Clammy hands.

LUDWIG: Irritation of the skin? Numbness?

DANNY: Don't think so.

BECKY: What kind of kisser do you think I am?

LUDWIG: Damn. We're out of swabs. We'll take a sample later. Full diagnostics. We'll need to eliminate any contagions.

BECKY: Contagions! Danny. What the hell is going on?

DANNY: Nothing. It's fine ...

LUDWIG: That's right, dear. Everything's fine. In fact, if you could look this way ...

[Dr LUDWIG shines a neural inhibitor in Becky's eyes (think Men in Black). She's paralysed.]

DANNY: Dad! What have I told you? You can't just zap people like that!

LUDWIG: She'll be fine. Besides, we're done zapping. Thank Jupiter. These vessels. So restrictive. And itchy. The skin. The hair. The constant leaking of liquids and gas.

DANNY: They're not that bad.

LUDWIG: They're intolerable. Never felt so dense. Sooner we're off this rock the better.

DANNY: Their bodies are lacking. But they're smart.

LUDWIG: Smart! Last week a man lit a cigarette at a fuel station. Blew up half a city block.

DANNY: They've built cities. Culture. Art.

LUDWIG: They've also built bombs. Which they drop on their cities, culture and art.

DANNY: They're not all like that.

LUDWIG: Just enough. I give them a thousand years. Two if they're lucky. You getting these?

DANNY: They're coming in fast.

LUDWIG: Huddle close. We can save energy on the particle transfer.

DANNY: I don't think I can.

LUDWIG: The kiss? You look pale.

DANNY: I think I want to stay.

LUDWIG: Humour? At a time like this! They have rubbed off on you.

DANNY: I'm serious.

LUDWIG: Are you mad!? You've seen what these creatures do.

DANNY: I have. And you're right. They're violent. Lazy. Illogical. But they care about one another. Love one another. No matter how weird they can be.

LUDWIG: It's the girl isn't it? I knew it. You went native!

DANNY: That was our job.

LUDWIG: No. Observe and report. Observe. And report. What's the commander gonna say? You're risking your future even considering this.

DANNY: What future? There's nothing out there.

LUDWIG: You know that's not true.

DANNY: Might as well be. We've been searching for millennia. What have we found? A slug. Some moss. A glob of mucus on a dead rock.

LUDWIG: Yes, but imagine what we'll find next. It could be incredible. I could be divine. It could be ... like us ...

DANNY: I don't want divine. I want ... real.

[Beat]

LUDWIG: You know they consume living organisms.

DANNY: I know.

LUDWIG: They excrete waste through their reproductive organs.

DANNY: I know.

LUDWIG: They don't know how gravity works.

DANNY: They'll figure it out.

[Beat.]

LUDWIG: Very well.

DANNY: Really?

LUDWIG: It's a free galaxy. For now. Who am I to tell you how to live? Or in what body.

DANNY: What about the commander?

LUDWIG: I'll say they ate you. Apparently, that's still a thing. Besides, who knows? Maybe a thousand years from now I'll swing back. Grab a status report for the archive.

DANNY: Thanks, Dad.

[Danny holds Dr LUDWIG tight. Dr LUDWIG can barely stand it.]

LUDWIG: You know I'm not your father. You're a thousand years older than me.

DANNY: I know.

LUDWIG: You're a weird guy, Danny.

DANNY: I know.

[LFX: blinking lights of an approaching UFO]

LUDWIG: Well, that's me. Best of luck! Remember, the green light means go. Ice cream is not a fertiliser. And never discuss religion at the dinner table. You'll starve before you convince them! Farewell.

[Dr LUDWIG exits.]

[LFX: as UFO takes off]

[Beat]

[Danny places a hand on Becky's shoulder.]

DANNY: You can look now.

BECKY: We're in a field. Why are we in a field?

DANNY: Look up.

[She looks up.]

[LFX: light change to reveal a sky full of glittering stars]

BECKY: Holy shit.

DANNY: Cool huh?

BECKY: Yeah. It's ... it's ...

DANNY: Big?

BECKY: Beautiful. I was gonna say beautiful.

DANNY: Almost as beautiful as what's down here.

[He takes her hand. They look up at the sky.]

[Blackout.]

ENDS